

Subject: teacher's day celebration

It is appropriate on the occasion of the Teacher's day (September 4) to remember how in his usual style, P.K.Srinivasan made this day a memorable day for the students who studied in the Muthialpet High School during the years he taught there. It is especially important to record this contribution of P.K.Srinivasan since it is perhaps not as widely known (and adopted elsewhere) as many of his other projects.

His idea of celebrating the Teacher's day was simple - on that day, every period of every classroom will have a "student teacher" from that class (or from the next class) who will teach for the entire time period. He chose these student-teachers from the School Honor Society (a body he created to promote academic excellence - something akin to the Principal's list or the Dean's list). These students will contact the teacher of the subject they have been assigned and the teacher will assign a unit or lesson to be covered on that day. The student will prepare that lesson or module and become the teacher while the real teacher will sit at the back of the class and observe. A feedback form will be given to the (real) teacher to write a summary of the student teacher's performance. At the end of the day, all the student-teachers will assemble and P.K.Srinivasan will address them. An important part of this meeting was when some students would come forward and relate their experience.

I have never heard of this type of activity (in which the entire school participated for an whole day) in any other school, so I surmise that this format for the Teacher's day was conceived entirely by P.K.S. One can imagine the amount of work involved in organizing such as event (which, during the four years I witnessed it, went without any glitch). There was no secretarial support, no computers no printers, nothing! With the help of a handful of students, he worked tirelessly to make the event a success!

Why did he propose to celebrate the Teacher's day in this manner? Was it to put a student in the shoes of a teacher to make him understand the tribulations a teacher experiences every day? Or is it to give a break to the teachers from the daily drudgery of teaching? I never asked him this question so I don't know the answer. But my guess is that he wanted to provide an opportunity for the students to experience the joy of teaching so that at least some of them may decide to become teachers. This day played a decisive role in my decision to become an educator! I would n't be surprised if there are others whose choice of an academic career was rooted in their first taste for teaching - as a student-teacher.

(I am not sure if it is a note written by me or received by me from someone else)